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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on 14 June 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Hughes-Ferrari ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
later: Mr. Malmierca Diaz (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Cuba)

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07-38220 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Special Committee decision of 12 June 2006 concerning Puerto Rico (A/AC.109/2007/L.3 and L.7)

2. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that the delegations of Nicaragua and Panama had asked to participate in the Committee's consideration of the item. In accordance with established practice and since there were no objections, she invited the delegations of Panama and Nicaragua to take places at the Committee table.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2007/L.7

3. **Mr. Malmierca Diaz** (Cuba), introducing draft resolution A/AC.109/2007/L.7, said that, it called once again on the Government of the United States to allow the Puerto Rican people to exercise its legitimate right to genuine self-determination, while reiterating the principle that any initiative for the settlement of Puerto Rico's political status must originate with the Puerto Rican people. It again urged the Government of the United States to complete the return to the Puerto Rican people of all lands occupied in the past and the facilities in Vieques and Ceiba and to accelerate the cleaning-up and decontamination of all the areas used for military exercises and installations. It also noted that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had again expressed its solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico and referred to the Panama Proclamation adopted on the occasion of the Latin American and Caribbean Congress for the Independence of Puerto Rico held in November 2006.

4. The draft resolution expressed concern about continued violent actions against Puerto Rican independence fighters, called once more for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners held in United States jails and requested the General Assembly to undertake a comprehensive review of all aspects of the question of Puerto Rico. The draft resolution represented an unquestionable step forward from the resolutions adopted in previous years and he hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

Hearing of petitioners (aide-memoire 05.07 and Add.1)

5. **The Chairman** drew attention to the further requests for hearing contained in the addendum to aide-mémoire 05.07. She took it that the Special Committee wished to accede to those requests.

6. *It was so decided.*

7. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Romany-Siaca (Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

8. **Ms. Romany-Siaca** (Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico) said that the question of Puerto Rico, which everyone now recognized to be a colony, had been considered for 35 years by the Special Committee, where it had remained blocked. The General Assembly had only once discussed the matter, in 1953, when it had endorsed the false idea that the United States Congress' prior approval of the Puerto Rican Constitution was compatible with the principles of self-government. The time had come for Puerto Rico's allies in the Special Committee, led by pro-independence NGOs, to engage in individual lobbying with a view to bringing the issue before the General Assembly.

9. Because of its situation, Puerto Rico had been unable to take advantage of the economic development resulting from globalization. The percentage of people living below the poverty line was twice that of the poorest State in the United States and, because of the lack of real opportunities for progress, it suffered from high crime rates and brain drain. The island was on the verge of collapse. Moreover, because of its status as a colony, Puerto Rico was forced to accept such things as the imposition of the death penalty — which was prohibited by its Constitution — and pollution caused by the United States military.

10. Non-partisan draft legislation prepared by the Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico that would offer a means of facilitating the democratic choice of the population with regard to its natural right of self-determination was currently under consideration by the United States Congress. It called for a constitutional assembly on status that would give the Puerto Rican people the possibility of freely negotiating with the United States Congress the severing of its colonial ties. By contrast, another bill under consideration by that body called for a plebiscite to be authorized; it would

place the power of decolonization in the hands of the Congress. The Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico was determined to uphold its constitutional assembly bill. She called on the Special Committee to support Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and pointed out that another possibility might to seek the advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, as that had already proved to be useful in similar cases.

11. *Ms. Romany-Siaca withdrew.*

12. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Martín (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

13. **Mr. Martín** (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño) noted that, the economic and political crisis in the island resulting from the failure of the colonial model together with the territory's demilitarization had forced the United States Government to reconsider its colonial relationship with Puerto Rico. In 2005, the three political parties represented in Puerto Rico's Legislative Assembly had adopted a resolution calling on the United States Congress to resolve the problem of Puerto Rico's political status. With the exception of a small government minority, everyone in the island, desired real change. If the General Assembly were to debate the question, it would undoubtedly spur the United States Government and Congress to take more decisive steps to promote the decolonization of Puerto Rico. He hoped that by the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, Puerto Rico would be irreversibly moving forward on the road towards freedom and independence.

14. *Mr. Martín withdrew.*

15. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Baquero Navarro (Fundación Acción Democrática Puertorriqueña) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

16. **Mr. Baquero Navarro** (Fundación Acción Democrática Puertorriqueña) joined the earlier speakers in calling on the Special Committee to recommend that the question of Puerto Rico be considered by the General Assembly. Given the Bush Administration's public acknowledgement in an official report on the subject issued in December 2005, of the island's colonial status — which was a reversal of the position the United States had maintained since 1953 — the United States was duty-bound to recognize the Puerto Rican people's inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

17. The Special Committee should urge the United States Government to offer the Puerto Rican people a level playing field for deciding on the various options for decolonization and to include free association with sovereignty as a valid option in itself, subject to the conditions laid down in General Assembly resolutions 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). It was clear that the current relationship did not meet those conditions. Moreover, there was a precedent in that the United States had recognized the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau as having the status of free association with sovereignty.

18. The Special Committee should also recall in its resolution that the United States Congress had twice begun but never completed the process of examining the question, with the result that no plebiscite had ever been held. The Special Committee should therefore urge Congress to address the question with greater seriousness and good faith so as to set in motion a genuine process of self-determination and decolonization. It should also express support for a constitutional assembly on status, followed by a referendum, whereby the Puerto Rican people would be able to reach a sovereign decision on its political future. Lastly, he noted that self-determination must include the release — preferably before the start of the self-determination process — of all Puerto Rican political prisoners currently in United States jails.

19. *Mr. Baquero Navarro withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Villanueva Muñoz (Comité Pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Mr. Villanueva Muñoz** (Comité Pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico), said that he is seeking the release of three political prisoners, — Carlos Alberto Torres, Oscar López and José Pérez — currently in United States jails. Puerto Rican prisoners in the United States had all been subjected to torture and humiliating treatment. The prison in Marion, in particular, where Mr. López was being held, was regarded by Amnesty International as one of the worst in the world for human rights.

22. Any country that called on others to respect human rights was duty-bound to respect the human

rights of prisoners in its own prisons. He questioned the moral authority of the United States which claimed to act as the policeman of the world while itself flouting the most basic human rights. At a time when the United States Congress was considering legislation to resolve the question of the colonial status of Puerto Rico, it should release the political prisoners it was holding. He hoped that the resolution to be adopted by the Special Committee would contribute significantly to securing the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners from United States prisons.

23. *Mr. Villanueva Muñoz withdrew.*

24. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Reverón Collazo (Comité Puerto Rico en las Naciones Unidas) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

25. **Ms. Reverón Collazo** (Comité Puerto Rico en las Naciones Unidas) said that the right to self-determination was a fundamental right that underpinned all other rights and that the various international instruments dealing with decolonization and self-determination all affirmed that peoples subjected to colonialism should be protected so that they could fully exercise their right to self-determination and independence. The adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) in 1960 had nullified the validity of all earlier colonialist claims of sovereignty that violated the rights of peoples to self-determination. However, after more than 40 years and after dozens of resolutions on the need for the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their right to self-determination, the United States had yet to carry out its obligations to the Puerto Rican people.

26. The United States based its rule in Puerto Rico on the claim enshrined in General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) of 1953 that the people of Puerto Rico had effectively exercised their right to self-determination by adopting their own constitution and organizing their own government. The Government's position had always been that Puerto Rico belonged to but was not part of the United States and that it was subject to the plenary powers of the United States Congress. Clearly the political events in the 1950s leading up to resolution 748 (VIII) had been nothing but a fraud. Her organization joined others in denouncing the United States exploitation of the Puerto Rican environment and natural resources, and demanded that the United States respect the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence.

27. *Ms. Reverón Callazo withdrew.*

28. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rivera (Puertorriqueños Unidos En Acción) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

29. Mr. Rivera (Puertorriqueños Unidos En Acción) drew attention to the Final Declaration of the recent Havana Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which had reaffirmed the right of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, and to the subsequent Panama Proclamation adopted by the Latin American and Caribbean Congress for the Independence of Puerto Rico which had called for the independence of Puerto Rico. Amnesty International had issued a report condemning the human rights violations committed by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in Puerto Rico, including the killing of a separationist leader and the excessive use of force against local journalists.

30. The exercise of the right to self-determination must include the protection of the human rights of all Puerto Ricans, including those living in the diaspora, in particular the political prisoners serving long terms in United States prisons, where they were subjected to psychological pressure and mistreatment. The participation of Puerto Ricans living abroad in all phases of the decolonization process and of the determination of Puerto Rico's future had been approved by many sectors of Puerto Rican civil society. The United States Government continued to try to confuse world opinion as to the real nature of its political, economic, social and cultural power over Puerto Ricans. It had also tried to keep the question of Puerto Rico off the agenda of the General Assembly and invented various technical pretexts for failing to allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their right to self-determination.

31. *Mr. Rivera withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Santiago (Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

33. **Ms. Santiago** (Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico) called on the United States Government to stop persecuting, arresting, murdering and imprisoning fighters in the struggle for independence and to liberate those in prison. It must also allow investigations into the murders of various Puerto Rican patriots. The failure to adequately fund efforts to combat AIDS in

Puerto Rico and to clean up environmental contamination at former military bases was further evidence of the wilful neglect and violation of the rights of the Puerto Rican people.

34. Despite more than 100 years of United States occupation, Puerto Rico had maintained its national identity. The claim that Puerto Ricans had chosen their own form of government, which had been reflected in General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII), had been part of a deliberate scheme to deceive the international community. Human rights violations would not cease until Puerto Rico was free and independent, at which time the criminal colonial Power should pay substantial damages to the Puerto Rican people and nation. She requested members of the Special Committee to bring the question of Puerto Rico before the General Assembly.

35. *Ms. Santiago withdrew.*

36. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Malapanis (Socialist Workers Party) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

37. **Mr. Malapanis** (Socialist Workers Party) called for the immediate release of Puerto Rican independence fighters being held in United States prisons. Puerto Rico's independence was in the interests of the vast majority of the people in the United States. The divisions in the United States were between the bosses, who exploited everyone, especially Puerto Ricans, and the working people, who had no interest in the colonial rule of Puerto Rico. The United States Government had used Puerto Rico as a springboard for launching aggression against other countries, especially in the context of the so-called war on terrorism, which was a pretext to target any Government that didn't bow to United States dictates.

38. Puerto Rico's colonial domination reinforced systematic discrimination, racist prejudice and police brutality and ensured that Puerto Ricans could only be second-class citizens. The recent demonstrations in the United States by immigrant workers demanding recognition of their status as workers, not criminals, paralleled the demands of Puerto Rican freedom fighters that they not be treated as criminals. The Cuban revolution had pointed the way forward for working people and shown that it was possible to win genuine independence from United States imperialism.

39. *Mr. Malapanis withdrew.*

40. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Vega Ramos (Movimiento Autonomista Socialdemócrata) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

41. **Mr. Vega Ramos** (Movimiento Autonomista Socialdemócrata) said that his organization sought a status for Puerto Rico based on sovereignty and non-territorial association with the United States of America. The commonwealth status agreement of 1952 had provided for the right of future generations to complete the self-determination process, but efforts to exercise that right had been repeatedly frustrated by the United States Government, despite the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) in 1960, which recognized that right.

42. Two bills on the status of Puerto Rico had been submitted to the United States Congress. His organization, without expressing a preference for either bill, had stated that whatever Congress decided it must not exclude legitimate options for self-determination, such as a non-territorial association with sovereignty. If neither bill was adopted the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico would take action on a bill authorizing the Secretary of State of Puerto Rico to request admission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to the United Nations as a member in its own right. He pointed out that three other States formerly associated with the United States had successfully applied for membership in the United Nations.

43. He urged the Special Committee to recommend that the question of Puerto Rico and its self-determination be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly and to help persuade the United States Government to fulfil its commitments to democracy, the international community and the people of Puerto Rico.

44. *Mr. Vega Ramos (Movimiento Autonomista Socialdemócrata) withdrew.*

45. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Centeno Rodríguez (Frente Patriótico Arecibeño) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

46. **Ms. Centeno Rodríguez** (Frente Patriótico Arecibeño) recalled that her organization had previously drawn attention to United States efforts to bypass the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by introducing environmental legislation that would authorize the establishment in Puerto Rico of a

nuclear weapons protection facility. That legislation had now been adopted.

47. Puerto Rico was also the location of the National Arecibo Ionospheric Center, where an ionospheric heater had been installed for some time. While the heater ostensibly had civilian functions, the United States Department of Defense had included Arecibo in the environmental impact statement application submitted in October 1993 in connection with the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP).

48. The details of patents connected with the programme revealed that its applications included producing nuclear energy imitating an atomic bomb without having to actually detonate such a bomb. The National Arecibo Ionospheric Center had been involved in fulfilling such goals continuously for three decades through the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program and the Coupling, Energetics and Dynamics of Atmospheric Regions (CEDAR) programme.

49. Her organization had supplied the Special Committee with documents, including comparative photographs of the Center. The first, taken from promotional material on the Internet, differed from an image taken in 2007 which showed devices known to have been on the site since the 1990s. The inhabitants of Arecibo had not been aware of the effects of the atmospheric experiments, but CEDAR admitted working with the United States Department of Defense and using laser beams for decades. Cancer rates in the area were alarmingly high.

50. Given that the written statement by the National Nuclear Security Administration to the Senate Subcommittee on Strategic Forces indicated that one of the aims was to develop a new range of non-conventional weapons by 2030, using the Los Alamos testing site until a new site capable of producing plutonium was available, and that the documentation provided to the Special Committee included details regarding the acquisition of property in Arecibo by the United States Government, the people of Arecibo suspected that they were being included in that Government's plans to produce nuclear weapons. They therefore urged the Special Committee to refer the case of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly.

51. *Ms. Centeno Rodríguez withdrew.*

52. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. La Luz Feliciano (American Association of Jurists) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

53. **Ms. La Luz Feliciano** (American Association of Jurists) noting that the United States of America tended to bypass the intent of international treaties when it deemed that to be convenient, added that the colonial acquiescence of the current Puerto Rican authorities made it difficult to challenge that attitude.

54. A case in point was the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. From the definition of torture and cruel treatment in the Convention, one could infer that experimentation on poor native communities and depositing of toxic materials without providing for safe clean-up methods was prohibited by the Convention. However, the people of Vieques were still waiting for their land to be decontaminated and returned to them.

55. The United States had also failed to implement General Assembly decisions and resolutions regarding dismantling of military bases and installations by administering Powers and regarding control over natural resources. Moreover, Puerto Rican political prisoners were serving disproportionate sentences. The Special Committee should therefore refer the issue of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly.

56. *Ms. La Luz Feliciano withdrew.*

57. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bhatia (Representative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

58. **Mr. Bhatia** (Representative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) noted that, whenever they had been given a choice, the Puerto Rican people had chosen commonwealth status over annexation or independence. Most Puerto Ricans valued United States citizenship and recognized that there were better alternatives than annexation, which implied assimilation, and independence, which implied separation. Approximately 49 per cent of the population favoured commonwealth status, while 46 per cent favoured annexation (establishment as a federal state) and 5 per cent favoured independence (establishment as a republic). Any alternative status must be non-colonial and simultaneously respect modern principles of sovereignty and the desire for association with the United States of America.

59. In recent years, Puerto Ricans had fallen victim to anti-democratic moves which ran counter to the desire for, and principle of, self-determination. The Governor had made clear his commitment to a process of self-determination that was both democratic and freely chosen, rather than imposed, and that took account of the differences of view among Puerto Ricans. To that end, he had proposed a Constitutional Assembly on Status. With his support, the proposed Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act (H.R. 1230) — which would recognize the authority of the people of Puerto Rico to convene such a Constitutional Assembly and commit the House of Representatives to whatever solution they selected, as well as provide for the views of some 4 million Puerto Ricans resident in the United States of America to be considered — had been placed before the United States House of Representatives in February 2007. By contrast, the proposed Puerto Rico Democracy Act (H.R. 900), which would impose a controversial two-round voting process, would place commonwealth status at a disadvantage by making it the sole choice, requiring a "yes" or "no" vote in the first round, and risked presenting a stark choice in the second round between making Puerto Rico the 51st state of the United States of America and independence. The result could be an outcome that did not have popular support.

60. Finally, he said that referring the question to the General Assembly would help to dispel any doubt about the commitment of Puerto Rico and the United States of America to establish a non-traditional free, stable and democratic relationship of association compatible with the political climate of the twenty-first century.

61. *Mr. Bhatia withdrew.*

62. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Gilormini De Gracia (Movimiento Fuerza Electoral Puertorriqueña) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

63. **Mr. Gilormini De Gracia** (Movimiento Fuerza Electoral Puertorriqueña) said that his Movement, which represented Puerto Rican university students in Puerto Rico and in the United States of America, did not favour any particular status for Puerto Rico and was against worsening the existing divisions. It therefore called on all parties to reach a consensus aimed at placing Puerto Rico on a path to a better future. The Constitutional Assembly on Status provided a suitable forum for proponents of independence, autonomy, annexation and other options to put forward their views on Puerto Rico's political future.

64. The United States Congress currently had before it two bills: H.R. 1230, which proposed the Constitutional Assembly on Status, and H.R. 900, which was supported by Puerto Rico's non-voting representative in Congress and which aimed to make Puerto Rico the 51st state. The latter had many drawbacks, among them the fact that it was based on a task force report that had been widely criticized and that any legal challenges connected with the voting process would have to be considered by United States federal courts, rather than by Puerto Rican courts.

65. He hoped that the Special Committee would respect the principle of self-determination and support whatever majority decision the people of Puerto Rico took through a fair, democratic and inclusive process.

66. *Mr. Gilormini De Gracia withdrew.*

67. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pérez Lizasuain (Estudiantes de Derecho Hostosianos Pro Independencia (EDHPI)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

68. **Mr. Pérez Lizasuain** (Estudiantes de Derecho Hostosianos Pro Independencia), recalling that the Special Committee had adopted a total of 25 resolutions regarding Puerto Rico, to no avail, said that, given the economic, political and social hardships facing the nation, the Committee should recommend that the issue be referred to the General Assembly. That was particularly urgent in light of the sudden reversal by the United States of the position it had maintained for more than 50 years by its acknowledgement of the colonial nature of Puerto Rico's relationship with it.

69. *Mr. Pérez Lizasuain withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hernández López (Frente Autonomista Mayagüezano) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Hernández López** (Frente Autonomista Mayagüezano), recalling that General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) had recognized that the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico had effectively exercised their right to self-determination, said that his organization had written to the Secretary-General to request that Puerto Rico be admitted as a member to the United Nations. However, if the Organization believed that the United States still exercised full

powers over Puerto Rico, it should request that the United States immediately set in motion a process of decolonization.

72. The indifference the United States Government had shown to the wishes of the people of Puerto Rico was unacceptable. The Organization's failure to take a stand on the question of Puerto Rico was also unacceptable. He therefore called on the Committee to take immediate action to refer the question of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly.

73. *Mr. Hernández López withdrew.*

74. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ramos Rosado (ProLibertdad Freedom Campaign) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

75. **Mr. Ramos Rosado** (ProLibertdad Freedom Campaign) said that the imprisonment of Puerto Ricans for their political convictions and activities was a violation of their human rights and an act of repression against the Puerto Rican independence movement. The question of Puerto Rico was a key issue in the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. However, the United States had not acted on any of the Committee's recommendations.

76. The inhabitants of Puerto Rico did not live in a free and sovereign nation. They were second-class citizens who could not vote in presidential elections and were denied basic rights. They had been forcibly relocated from land that rightfully belonged to them and had been denied the right to manage their own economic development. Puerto Rico's fiscal crisis was rooted in the United States Government's manipulation of the Puerto Rican economy. The Puerto Rican independence fighters had been subjected to repression and surveillance because they were seen as threats to the colonial status quo. Some had even been assassinated.

77. His organization demanded the unconditional release of all remaining Puerto Rican political prisoners, including Carlos Alberto Torres, Oscar López Rivera, Haydee Beltrán Torres and José Pérez González. Those prisoners were activists who had been involved in social justice issues and had fought for civil rights. They were entitled to carry out such activities in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV). When they had been captured in April 1980, they had invoked prisoner-of-war status and had argued — to no avail — that the United States courts did not have jurisdiction to try them as criminals.

78. Given that none of them had been charged with having committed violent acts, their sentences were excessive. They had been tortured, denied medical treatment, placed in solitary confinement for excessive periods of time and denied visitation rights. It was clear that the United States Government was punishing them for their beliefs. Puerto Rican political prisoners were not the terrorists the United States Government had portrayed them to be. He therefore implored the United Nations to take immediate action to end the colonial occupation of Puerto Rico and called for the immediate release of the remaining political prisoners.

79. *Mr. Ramos Rosado withdrew.*

80. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Guadalupe Ortiz (Vieques, Si) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

81. **Mr. Guadalupe Ortiz** (Vieques, Si) said that the inhabitants of Vieques Island had not received justice and approximately 52 per cent of their land was controlled by the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, a United States federal agency that effectively managed the land for the Marines. Those lands had been bombed for over 60 years causing irreparable damage to wildlife and natural resources. He called on the Committee to denounce the Marines' plans to remain on Vieques Island and refuse the inhabitants the right of access to their land. A large proportion of the remaining 48 per cent of the land remained in the hands of a few landowners and one area had been used by the Marines to set up a radar that was supposed to be used to prevent drug trafficking but in fact was used for military purposes and for surveillance operations in Latin American countries.

82. The clean-up methods used in Vieques by companies contracted by the Marines included continued bomb detonations and open burning, which had devastating effects on wildlife and on the health of the inhabitants. Those methods were being used because they were cost-effective. Cost-effectiveness was considered more important than the inhabitants' health. He therefore called for an end to bomb detonations and open burning and for the use of safer clean-up methods. Decontaminated lands should be returned and the Marines should assume responsibility for those island inhabitants who had contracted illnesses as a result of the pollution.

83. *Mr. Guadalupe Ortiz withdrew.*

84. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Merill Ramírez (Colectivo de Trabajo Pro-Independencia de Mayagüez) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

85. **Ms. Merill Ramírez** (Colectivo de Trabajo Pro-Independencia de Mayagüez), updating the Committee on the harassment to which freedom fighters and community leaders were subjected, said that FBI raids on the homes and offices of pro-independence union, religious and community leaders were common. The full scale of the repression inflicted on freedom fighters by the federal Government was now coming to light, as 168,000 documents had been declassified and were available to the public.

86. Her organization had received numerous reports from activists who had been visited, interrogated, threatened and intimidated. All complainants were willing to testify in court and some had already contacted local media or civil rights organizations. She therefore called on the Committee to refer the question of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly for comprehensive consideration.

87. *Ms. Merill Ramírez withdrew.*

88. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ramos García (Coordinadora Nacional Rompiendo El Perímetro) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

89. **Ms. Ramos García** (Coordinadora Nacional Rompiendo El Perímetro), also speaking on behalf of Puertoriqueños por la Justicia, called for a full investigation into the murder of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos on 23 September 2005. The Government of Puerto Rico had tried to investigate the murder of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos and the attacks on the journalists that had reported on the police raids on the homes of freedom fighters on 10 February 2006 and had asked the FBI to provide the names of the agents involved in those incidents but the Bureau had refused. An independent investigation carried out by the Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico had received the same response from the Bureau. The matter had been referred to the United States Court in Puerto Rico, which had ruled in favour of the Bureau. Thus the people of Puerto Rico were, in effect, being denied access to justice in cases involving United States agencies.

90. Her organization called for the names of those involved in the cases in Puerto Rico to be submitted to the competent authorities in order to allow for a fair trial and for the question of Puerto Rico to be referred to the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.